

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT DEUTCHMAN
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TO
FCC ACTING CHAIRMAN MICHAEL J. COPPS**

**U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS,
TECHNOLOGY AND THE INTERNET**

**“OVERSIGHT OF THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT:
BROADBAND**

APRIL 2, 2009

Good morning Chairman Boucher, Ranking Member Stearns and Members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to be here to discuss the Commission’s role in the broadband programs established in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

I first want to commend the Subcommittee, Congress and President Obama for recognizing the importance of broadband to our nation at this critical time. As the country seeks to maintain, restore, and develop its infrastructure, it is imperative that we look towards building out broadband, which is the infrastructure we need to succeed in the Digital Age. As FCC Acting Chairman Copps likes to say, broadband is the great infrastructure challenge of our time and the Commission is pleased to be starting down the road toward meeting this challenge. I also want to thank Congress for recognizing the substantial expertise of the Commission and its staff when it directed the Commission to play a consultative role in the development of the Recovery Act’s grant and loan programs. And while this is important, many of us at the Commission believe that Congress charged the Commission perhaps with its most important responsibility since implementing the 1996 Telecom Act – the development of a comprehensive national

broadband plan to make sure that *all* Americans have the benefits of affordable, high-speed broadband.

At this juncture, Acting Chairman Copps would almost certainly point out – and I feel compelled to do the same – that “all” means everyone – whether you are rich or poor, live in a rural or urban area or on tribal lands, have a disability, are a small business, are a senior citizen or a high school student. Ubiquitous, affordable, high-speed broadband has the power to help restore our economic well-being and open the doors of opportunity for all Americans. With broadband’s potential benefits for jobs, education, public safety, the environment, health care, and so much more, there could not be a better time to begin developing and implementing a national broadband plan.

The Commission is moving forward simultaneously on several broadband-related fronts. Pursuant to the Recovery Act, we are lending our expertise to our colleagues at the NTIA and RUS as they implement the grant and loan programs. The Commission is seeking public comment on the definitions that we have been asked to consult on: broadband, unserved area, underserved area, interconnection obligations, and non-discrimination. In addition, as required by the Farm Bill of 2008, and in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture, Acting Chairman Copps will be preparing a report for Congress by May 22 on a rural broadband strategy. The Commission has sought public comment on these rural broadband issues as well. We very much appreciate the inter-agency coordination and consultation that is occurring with NTIA and RUS on all of these issues.

As we continue to refine our views, the Commission staff will be hearing from a broad array of stakeholders, including public interest, private sector, governmental, and

consumer groups to ensure that we receive the benefit of a wide range of perspectives. The information the Commission gleans from these efforts will undoubtedly help inform the Commission as it develops the vital national broadband plan.

And this gets, arguably, to the most important piece of the puzzle for us. At its next Open Meeting on April 8th, the Commission plans to kick-off its efforts to develop a national broadband plan. The Acting Chairman has circulated a Notice of Inquiry to his colleagues that is intended to be broad in scope. This is, of course, only the beginning of the process. The Commission, among other things, plans to receive input from traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, complete consumer surveys and international comparisons as required by statute, and work with federal, state and local agencies in gathering the best ideas. By next February, the Commission will complete the task that Congress entrusted us with: to provide Congress and the American people with a national broadband strategy – a plan of action for meeting the broadband infrastructure challenge facing the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.